

First Presbyterian Church *tidings*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | LIVINGSTON, TX | DECEMBER 2016

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Present Possibilities, Frontiers of Faith

Brazilian theologian Rubem Alves called hope “the suspicion ... that the frontiers of the possible are not determined by the limits of the present.” Who among us doesn’t sometimes imagine our future based solely on present-day obstacles? Even biblical heroes did so.

Abraham and Sarah laughed at God’s promise of a child, seeing only their present circumstance of old age. Only in hindsight could Joseph see how God turned slavery in Egypt into great good.

At first another Joseph, learning his fiancée was pregnant, believed his world was limited to two possibilities: shame Mary publicly or divorce her quietly.

Truth Incarnate

The Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as this truth of the Incarnation.

—J.I. Packer

But his heart was open to God’s message: “What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [Her] son ... will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21, NIV). How exceedingly far this future must have seemed from the limits of Joseph’s present.

Christmas is a reminder that God calls us all into frontiers of the future we never could have dreamed!

Church Events

- Dec 4th - Congregational Meeting after Service; Poinsettia order forms available
- Dec 5th - Deacon Meeting 4:00 p.m.
- Dec 7th – Worship Meeting 10 a.m.
- Dec 12th - Presbyterian Women Meet 1:30 p.m.
- Dec 18th – Combined Elders and Deacons Session Meeting after the Service
- Dec 24th - “Candles & Carols” Candlelight Communion Service 5:00 p.m.

Evangelism Committee



The Evangelism Committee met at 4pm on Thursday, November 3, 2016, in the Fellowship Hall. Four of our five-member committee were present.

Four of us attended and participated in the Hallelujah Harvest held at the First Assembly of God on Halloween evening. Many thanks to Pastor Joe, Nina Dobyms and Doug Palmer for their efforts. Joe is a balloon animal maker extraordinaire! A crowd estimated at 3,700 attended and enjoyed the food, rides and games. Prayers and Bible readings were prevalent and there was no doubt that our Lord was “in the house!”

Facebook: I had a telephone conversation with Pam, who is a paid employee in the office of Central Baptist Church. We are considering asking for a short message from a church representative who uses Facebook to tell us their pros and cons at the beginning of one of our Sunday Worship services.

We have considered the cost of purchasing about 40 tee-shirts of various sizes to be worn by our church members when and where they wish. Each would have our church name on the back. Total cost would be approximately \$400.00, well above our \$150.00 budget for 2017. Church member donations outside the budget might be the answer. (Session to vote.)

Jay Walrath, Evangelism Chair

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.

Micah 5:2



Mission Update

What a fantastic second Sunday in November: first, a great Thanksgiving feast, and second, outstanding participation in filling 52 shoeboxes which, via Samaritan's Purse, will be sent to children around the world. The Mission Committee thanks all who contributed with items and cash, and to all who in record time folded the boxes and then filled them. We were cleaned up and gone by 1:30pm.

The new Mission project is our annual participation in Polk County's "Empty Stocking" program. This is a joint Christmas project sponsored by the Livingston Interagency Council to help provide Christmas for the children of approved families. This year we have two: one with an infant girl (1 ½) and the other with a girl (5) and a boy (8). All donated items must be unwrapped and at the church no later



than Dec. 12th, as we must turn everything in on the 14th. Last year, 248 low income families with 693 children were provided items to help them enjoy Christmas, and we sponsored two families with a total of six children.

Mission has turned in its 2017 budget request, which is \$28,400, just a bit higher than our current one. All of these funds go to help others, mostly in the Polk County area; check out the listing on the board in the Narthex.

If anyone would like to join the Mission committee, our chairs are always welcome for your use. Let me know.

Chuck Davidson, Mission Chair

Music Program

The Music Department wishes you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year. Throughout the month of December, the Music Department (including all the ensembles and soloists) will be presenting Christmas music during the worship hour rather than a single Sunday music program. On Christmas Eve we will present "*Candles & Carols: a service of hope, peace, joy, and love*".



The choir also hopes you will be with us every Sunday in the worship service as we prepare for the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Better yet, join the choir.

Rejoice,

Karlene Barker, Music Program Director

WANTED.....WANTED.....WANTED

One hand bell ringer for the
Jubilant Ringers

Rehearsal: Tuesdays 5:30-6:15



Jesus came to make the world over.

It was an old world and He came to make it new;

It was a tired world and He came to give it rest;

It was a sorrowing world and He came to bid it rejoice;

It was a dark world and He came to give it light;

It was a dying world and He came to give it life;

It was an imprisoned world and He came to give it liberty;

It was a lost world and He came to take it back to God.

-Anonymous



Worship Committee

We are in danger of losing the awe, the wonder, the praise of true worship by failing to keep before us constantly the mystery and glory of the Incarnation.—William Greathouse.

Thanks to Mark Nye and Pastor Joe for the reading and ringing of the bell on All Saints' Day.

We also want to thank Patty Harrell for the wreath on Veterans Day, November 13.

Additional thanks go to Hershel Mackey for the reading he gave on Veterans Day, and to Robert Green for filling the pulpit Nov. 27th while the pastor was on vacation.

By the time the December Tidings are printed, the **GREENS** will have been hung and the sanctuary decorated for the Christmas Season. Thanks to all those who helped.

There will be order forms in the bulletins for ordering the Christmas Poinsettias on December 4, 11, and 18. Advent Devotional booklets are available in the bookcase in the Narthex.

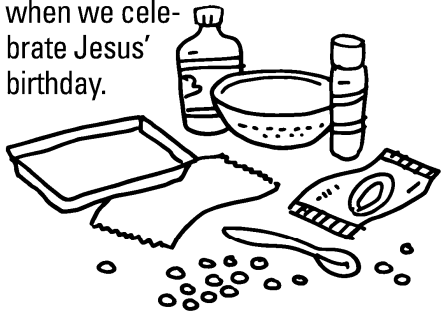
The Christmas Eve Service will be at 5pm, with a short choir musical, communion, and candlelight service.

Glenn Drumm, Worship Chair

MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR

birthday bark

Make this yummy treat to give to family and friends at Christmas, when we celebrate Jesus' birthday.



What you need:

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 3 cups chocolate chips
- Microwave-safe bowl
- Spoon or spatula
- 2 Tbsp. shortening
- Baking tray lined with wax paper
- Red and green M&M's (or sprinkles)

What you do:

1. Lightly spray bowl and wax paper.
2. Microwave chocolate chips in bowl for one-minute intervals until chocolate is melted. (Stir after each minute.)
3. Stir in shortening. Heat in 10-second intervals, stirring until smooth.
4. Pour chocolate onto tray and firmly press in M&M's or sprinkles.
5. Refrigerate until firm. Remove bark and break into pieces.



Wisdom is Your BFF

"If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally without reproach, and it will be given to him"
James 1:5.

For those who may not be initiated, BFF means "best friend forever". And how true that is. The genius of Solomon is that, of all the things he could have asked God for, he chose wisdom. Isn't it interesting that with the wisdom God gave him came everything else? We speak of kings or "wise men" following a star to see a new born King. It wasn't what they knew about this king, they had little factual knowledge. It was a sense of understanding and insight that something cosmically significant was about to take place, which was a priority for them and the world. Amassing knowledge about anything is possible for anyone and is available at the click of a mouse and the internet. Wisdom is not so much about how much knowledge one has, but how one utilizes that knowledge to the benefit of those around him or her. Some of the wisest men or women you and I have known have not been those who necessarily had lots of knowledge. They were people who had learned, often the hard way, and had profound insight and discernment. I like one definition of wisdom which says "wisdom is learning from experience, that of others who have been there."

Blessings, Pastor Joe



Spirit of Xmas Be

Don't force it, let it come,
easy, easy now

Coming on a star perforated night

Piercing pristine air

Timeless, stillness never ending

Perceived alone in the universe

It comes with gentle caress, warmth flowing

Soul seeking apex, Your God so ever near

Filled with love's glowing mantle

Restive thoughts need ne'er appear

Angelic voices, ringing clear

Wafted thru void, perceived to be

Love encompass, malice none

Memories past, more to come

Crackling coals, flicker of flame

Spiral of smoke, skyward seeking

Pungent, tho sweet, pleasing yet

Myriad lites, dancing fro

Kaleidoscope to senses swirl

Filled with Him, let never veer

Spirit same, shall ever be.

By Tommy Fluker



PW Annual Mission Pledge

Our annual Mission Pledge Sunday will be January 8, 2017, immediately after 10:00 a.m. worship service.

Everyone is invited.

The PW Mission Pledge supports all aspects for the mission of the Presbyterian Church USA. Your donation on January 8th will be greatly appreciated.

A donation of your special dish for everyone to enjoy would also be great!

Writing a check? Please write your check, made payable to PW of Livingston.

Hope to see you on January 8, 2017

Blessings, Star Starling (327-5301)



Overcoming Despair

Christmas can be a difficult time for people who are hurting or grieving. In the 1860s, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had reason to despair: America was at war with itself, his son was severely wounded in battle and his wife died in a fire. The first Christmas after his wife's death, Longfellow wrote, "How inexpressibly sad are all holidays."

Three years later, on Christmas Day 1864, Longfellow penned a poem that later became the song "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." The lyrics move from despair to hope — and, thanks to Jesus, so can we.

And in despair I bowed my head.

There is no peace on earth, I said!

*For hate is strong, and mocks the song
of peace on earth, good will to men!*

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:

God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!

*The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
with peace on earth, good will to men!*

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Our December Birthdays:

- Miriam Preston, 12/07
- Susan Jones, 12/10
- Marjorie Tolls, 12/12
- David Sessums, 12/14
- Harry Bristol, 12/29
- Georgina Drumm, 12/30
- Ruth Dominy 12/31



Happy Birthday

Our December Anniversary:

- Ben & Barbara Morris, 12/29



Sunday Services:

Adult Bible Study – 9:00 a.m.

Worship -10:00 a.m.

Children's Celebration (for youngsters ages 5 & older) - 10:00 a.m.

Nursery for children up to age 4 is available at all church meetings, services, and events.



Christmas Meal

The Fellowship Committee will be providing the ham and rolls for our Christmas luncheon after the Worship Service on December 11th.

Ladies, please bring your favorite holiday sides, salads and goodies. We will all be looking forward to those special things we only make at Christmas time.

See you there!!!

Karen Palmer

